

## **A Guide To The Reader**

*Pastor recommends that to obtain maximum benefit from his comments you read in full from the Bible every reference whenever one appears. Otherwise the reading of the comments is simply a skimming over the surface. They are rather designed to make you stop and meditate and even look up further references as the Holy Spirit guides you. Do pray before you read that the Holy Spirit will be your Tutor and that the time you spend will be time spent with Him.*

### **Ecclesiastes 6**

6.1-2. Beware of the love of accumulating, or of hoarding - especially wealth. This is such a common occurrence in all ages and in all societies that Solomon cautions us not to embark on that way, for it is an evil disease and is one of the expressions of pointless, meaningless living. If we store up more than is necessary, even bearing in mind emergency contingencies, then it is likely that we will never have the use of them, or enough of them. They will go to rot; or will be given away or, if surplus books, clothing, or a collection of any sort, sold at auction after our death. The key thing is that we will never have the use of them. We have them while we live; but we scarcely ever look at them. It begets a warped, proud spirit within, for we trust them as our reserves instead of trusting the Lord for our daily supplies. "Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish...these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches" (Psalm 73.7,12).

6.3-5. We are told in 2 Chronicles 11.21 that Rehoboam had 28 sons and 60 daughters, a total of 88. And that Ahab had a minimum of 70 children, having seventy sons in Samaria, while there may have been some elsewhere, to say nothing of daughters (2 Kings 10.1). For all Rehoboam's faults he made good use of them for the strengthening of the kingdom by dispersing them as leaders in every area (2 Chronicles 11.22-23). We are to think of Solomon meaning "**even if**" a man has 100 children, and if it were also to happen that his soul were not filled with good that that would be a disastrous scenario. Perhaps, as he observed the early days of his son Rehoboam, Solomon thought he might yet beget 100 children; perhaps Rehoboam was aware of Solomon his father's preaching and took steps to ensure that he heeded the advice, for we read that "he dealt wisely" in this matter, though not in the matter recorded in 2 Chronicles 10.13.

Jezebel had no burial (1 Kings 22.23-24; 2 Kings 9.30-37). An untimely birth means a stillbirth or an aborted birth. Solomon's reasoning here is that such a one is better off. By not surviving there was no struggle throughout life only to die later; and, for all there might be of a long life, precious little was the ultimate achievement if there was no "soul good" or the life ended in such shame as to warrant no burial or in battle where there was no time for burial. The use of the expression "his soul be not filled with good" is a stark reminder that if we are not saved through the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ our life will have been lived in vain. Others might benefit from our life; our children would have their lives because we lived. But as to ourselves, without eternal salvation, and especially if life itself were lived in harsh times, no ultimate personal benefit would have accrued to us for our days on earth.

6.6 Taking up the “even if” thought once again, Solomon says that even if we had the chance to live “a thousand years twice told” death would still be the end of it, if we did not have eternal life. It would still have been characterised by unremitting labour and be simply a repetition over a greater length of time of the same old circumstances.

“Told” means counted. A “teller” in a bank is the counting clerk, or the counter clerk. When Psalm 90.9 tells us, “we spend our years as a tale that is told” the picture is not of storytelling but of counting. A tally that is counted out.

“Do not all go to one place?” No. If all that is meant were death and the grave that would be true. But after death the judgment, and in consequence of that we do not all go to the same place. The great multitudes of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake “some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12.2). The Lord Jesus Christ has an extended passage of teaching on this very subject, which it would be good to read now, in Matthew 25. 30-46 with His unmistakeable conclusion that “these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Matthew 25.46). No, we do not all go to one place. “As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many” (Hebrews 9.27-28). Precisely because there is a judgment to come, the Lord Jesus Christ made an atonement for the sins of His people.

6.7. Eating to live is one thing; living to eat is quite another. An exorbitant appetite for food, or lusting after any other thing, is deadly. “Put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite” (Proverbs 23.2). It is magnificently summed up by the apostle John, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2.15-17).

6.8. It is cynical to think that there is no point in a wise man exercising wisdom because he will die just like the fool. Likewise, it is cynical to think that there is no advantage to a poor honest labourer over a layabout in this life, purely because we all die. However, such thoughts are as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, for it is true that without the salvation that is in Christ we shall all be lost, though some will have a severer judgment than others. “That servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more” (Luke 12.47-48).

6.9. Unbridled lust rears out of control whatever form it takes. The Lord Jesus Christ said, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5.27-28). This is a variation of “a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush,” and even of the observation that the grass always appears greener in the other field. Actually to possess, and to enjoy that possession with contentment, whatever it be,

is much better, and certainly much safer morally, than always to be alighting on this or that figment of the imagination.

6.10. History repeats itself. The characters and situations differ but the principles remain the same. The name Adam means “of the earth.” “The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven” (1 Corinthians 15.47). In Genesis 2.19-20 we read, “And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field.” New things are still discovered and new names given, but the meaning here is that there is no situation which has not been met with somewhere before, nor any situation with which the Lord cannot deal or in which we cannot refer to Him for help. Each situation is of man’s doing or devising and invariably because of his sin. The whole sequence of the accomplishments on the one hand, and the savage tempers on the other, of those who are banished from the presence of God which are catalogued in Genesis 4, comes to a climax resulting in the flood and is resumed again in the descendants of the flood.

Nothing is too hard for the Lord to control, even the flood, in taming unruly mankind. “Now the Egyptians are men and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the Lord shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they shall all fail together” (Isaiah 31.3). This verse invites our considered attention to mankind’s limitations and may be summed up by the saying, “the best of men is but a man at best.”

6.11-12. “Who knoweth what is good for man in this life?” Only God. “He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold...He performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him” (Job 23.10,14). The Lord has given us the scriptures by which we may discover during our appointed time in this life how to conduct ourselves in a way that will, indeed, be good for us. “Now the God of peace...make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” (Hebrews 13.20-21).